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Enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections

Report of the Secretary-General**

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 54/173 of 17 December 1999, and is divided into three main sections: section II, on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 52/129 of 12 December 1997 and 54/173; section III, on United Nations experience; and section IV, which deals with future activity. The two annexes to the report provide a summary of electoral assistance activities undertaken during the period from 1 October 1999 to 31 July 2001, and the note of guidance for the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the provision of electoral assistance.

2. Over the past two years, particular attention has focused on the dynamic environment in which elections are planned and conducted, in which there are two significant types of factors: those integral to national experience and those that reflect external developments within the technical field of elections. With regard to internal considerations, the emphasis in the early 1990s on elections as isolated, periodic events has changed. Elections are clearly important elements in ongoing political life, which have important implications for other national institutions and processes. Priority is now placed on the creation of sustainable electoral processes and institutions, a process that requires appropriate synergy with other elements of changing political and socio-economic systems. New standards for the conduct of elections, innovative applications of information technology and increased commercialization offer unprecedented opportunities and risks for electoral commissions seeking greater efficiencies and resource savings. Given these challenges, it is essential that the United Nations remain abreast of new trends and technologies in order to continue to provide consistent and unbiased assistance, guided exclusively by the most appropriate applications for the requesting Member State.

3. In view of the evolution of electoral assistance, the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division has developed a series of assistance modalities in order better to support the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance activities and respond more effectively to electoral assistance needs. The Division has also sought to strengthen the coordination of the activities of the United Nations system through increased interdepartmental and inter-agency consultations at senior and working levels, preparation of procedural and policy guidelines, and sharing of best election practices and past experience from the Division's archive. Efforts are being made to ensure centralized and consistent quality control of assistance projects from beginning to end, regardless of the implementing agency. In consultation with Governments, more specific attention is being directed to capacity-building and the tailoring of assistance to suit the prevailing political and electoral environment. This approach has often led to requests for follow-on assistance and sequential upgrading of components of the electoral process.

4. The trend towards more comprehensive requests for electoral assistance has placed new demands upon the existing resources of the United Nations system, making coordination and effective division of labour more important than ever before. Long-term involvement with electoral situations such as those in East Timor and Sierra Leone requires dedicated staff; in the meantime, a large number of smaller but important operations require regular backstopping, periodic monitoring and final evaluation. Electoral assistance projects, once approved, require more than sporadic attention. The United Nations remains committed to providing the electoral assistance of the highest quality, dedicated to the specific needs of each project. As the United Nations seeks to maintain these standards of assistance, however, the Organization risks becoming a victim of its own success: the volume and content of requests over the past biennium threaten to exceed current support capacities.

II. Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 52/129 and 54/173

A. Consolidation of electoral assistance capacities within the United Nations system

5. The demand for electoral assistance and the diversity of requests has continued to generate new activities and modes of cooperation within the United Nations system. The focal point for United Nations electoral assistance activities (the Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs), designated by the

Secretary-General, remains the first formal point of contact for the receipt and evaluation of requests for assistance. An essential element in the evaluation is the determination that the necessary political and technical elements exist for the conduct of a viable electoral process. The focal point also ensures that all requests are given equal consideration in accordance with established guidelines. Only after a careful review of the current electoral situation and relevant historical experience can a determination be made as to whether the United Nations will provide assistance and, if so, which type of assistance.

6. The Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs continues to assist the United Nations focal point in responding to requests. The Division is responsible for coordinating the provision of electoral assistance by the United Nations system, providing quality control and ensuring a consistent application of standards throughout the lifetime of a project. The Division retains the institutional memory of more than one decade of United Nations electoral experience and maintains the system-wide roster of international electoral experts, thus ensuring consistency in the quality of expertise provided.

7. In recent years, the number of requests for assistance has continued to be high. Because of the increased complexity in the types of demands received by the United Nations, the Electoral Assistance Division has developed assistance modalities to cover a comprehensive range of services that can be provided by the United Nations system. As noted in previous reports, technical assistance has traditionally been the most frequently requested form of assistance, and the Electoral Assistance Division differentiated three specific types of technical assistance support: (a) process assistance; (b) capacity-building; and (c) institution-building. More recently, requests for assistance have been received not only from Member States but also from offices and programmes in the United Nations system. The Electoral Assistance Division has devised a new mechanism to address these internal requests by fielding expert advisory service missions.

B. Coordination in the United Nations system

8. In view of the increased complexity of electoral assistance requests, coordination in the United Nations system is a high priority for the Electoral Assistance Division. Major counterparts in the Secretariat are the regional divisions of the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The former is the lead department for preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-building, while the latter is the lead department for the duration of peacekeeping operations mandated by the Security Council. Since field activities of both departments may include electoral assistance, the Electoral Assistance Division participates in relevant interdepartmental task forces organized by either department when elections are involved. The Electoral Assistance Division frequently participates in meetings of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, the Departmental Prevention Team and interdepartmental and departmental meetings when electoral issues are discussed.

9. Similar to the relationship with officers of the Department of Political Affairs, the Electoral Assistance Division maintains continuing liaison with officers of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations when peacekeeping operations include an electoral component. Advice is also provided on a continuing basis to special representatives of the Secretary-General and other senior mission staff. The interdepartmental task force related to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) have been major venues for planning and cooperation during the past biennium.

10. Within the Secretariat, the Electoral Assistance Division maintains regular contact with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is continuing its work on the project on the administration and cost of elections together with UNDP, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the International Foundation for Election Systems. Together with the Australian Electoral Commission, the Division has developed the first pilot initiative to make use of the aforementioned

project to provide hands-on capacity-building to electoral administrators in the East Timor elections. Discussions with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs focus on elections that involve substantial populations of refugees and/or internally displaced persons.

11. Outside the Secretariat, UNDP, with its broad mandate for supporting governance activities in Member States and through its management of the resident coordinator/resident representative system, is the main partner of the Electoral Assistance Division. The United Nations Volunteers, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Office of Project Services also work on specific elements of United Nations electoral assistance.

12. In many countries, UNDP has a large governance portfolio that includes long-term technical assistance projects to strengthen electoral authorities. Prior to engaging in these activities, UNDP coordinates with the Electoral Assistance Division in order to ensure consistency of approach, and relies on the Division's roster of international electoral experts to carry out its activities. Furthermore, the Division provides substantive monitoring and back-up for most electoral projects carried out by UNDP.

13. Over the past two years, coordination has been strengthened at various levels of the Organization. At the highest level, meetings are held each month between the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and focal point for electoral assistance activities and the Administrator of UNDP. Furthermore, the Electoral Assistance Division works closely with all five regional bureaux at UNDP headquarters and with resident representatives in the field. Officers of the Electoral Assistance Division participate in cluster meetings of resident representatives. At the field level, resident coordinators are responsible for ensuring an effective and coordinated response to requests for electoral assistance. In many cases, resident coordinators receive the first indication from a government that electoral assistance may be desired. The resident coordinators, as the field representatives of the Department of Political Affairs, are responsible for informing Governments of the procedure for requesting assistance and ensuring proper follow-through with the focal point at United Nations Headquarters. They are also frequently responsible for mobilizing resources for electoral projects designed jointly with the Electoral Assistance Division.

14. In order to clarify the procedures to be followed and the division of responsibilities, the focal point for electoral assistance activities and the Administrator of UNDP issued a binding note of guidance on United Nations electoral assistance in January 2001. This note specifies the roles and responsibilities of the focal point, the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP, and was transmitted to all UNDP resident coordinators in order to ensure their understanding and ability to advise interested Governments appropriately. A copy of the note of guidance is provided in annex II to the present report.

15. The United Nations Volunteer programme (UNV) has continued its important contributions to electoral assistance through the timely provision of qualified staff for electoral operations. Electoral staffing is now among the primary components of UNV activity. In view of its role in staffing electoral missions, preparations are being made for the signing of a memorandum of understanding between UNV and the Electoral Assistance Division. This memorandum of understanding will elaborate modalities for streamlining and harmonizing respective administrative procedures. During the period 1999-2001, UNV provided specialized staff for electoral missions in East Timor, Fiji, Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, Kosovo and the Niger.

16. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continues to assist with project implementation in countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Yemen and Mozambique. UNOPS is responsible for project formulation, recruitment of appropriate technical staff and administrative backstopping throughout the lifetime of the project. UNOPS is also frequently requested to assist within the procurement of electoral material. In the light of the increased demand for its services, UNOPS has designated a senior focal point who coordinates electoral assistance activities with the Electoral Assistance Division on an as needed basis.

17. In an effort to familiarize officers from the DPA, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNDP and other relevant offices with United Nations procedures for electoral assistance and to sensitize them to the range of issues that an electoral intervention entails, the Electoral Assistance Division conducted the first of a series of intensive training

courses in June 2001. The course materials have been posted on the web site of the Division. Additional training courses are planned for UNDP resident coordinators and other senior officials in the biennium 2001-2002.

C. Cooperation with other organizations

18. The Electoral Assistance Division has continued to seek out new partners in its work, while undertaking new projects and activities with established and long-term collaborators. In 2001, the Division dispatched a senior staff member to the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) with a view to strengthening the dialogue between the two organizations. An informal agreement was reached on the need to cooperate more closely on the provision of technical assistance in the field and on the composition and organization of international observer missions. In the context of a meeting sponsored by the Government of Botswana, IDEA, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Electoral Assistance Division expanded its network of partnerships with key electoral authorities in the region.

19. In the provision of international observers and the coordination of international observers for elections, the United Nations continued its standing arrangements with regional organizations and referred such activity to the regional organization as the lead agency when appropriate. The Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were particularly involved with the observation of elections during the reporting period. In several of these cases, such as Haiti, Nicaragua and Peru, the Electoral Assistance Division provided technical assistance or advisory services as a complement to the observation undertaken by the regional organization.

20. In June 2000, an agreement was reached on regular information sharing between the Electoral Assistance Division and the European Union (EU) on issues of mutual interest. Later that year, a senior officer of the Division served as a resource person for a "training of trainers" seminar held by EU and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for selected participants from EU member States. The purpose of the seminar was to achieve a common understanding and approach in organizing international election observation missions.

21. Over the past two years the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) held regular discussions with the Electoral Assistance Division with the goal of increasing cooperation with regard to electoral assistance and democratization processes. OIF participated in several observation missions coordinated by the United Nations, such as the presidential and parliamentary elections in the Niger in 1999 and the presidential election in Chad in May 2001. In July 2001, OIF seconded a junior professional officer from Rwanda to work with the Electoral Assistance Division.

22. In November 2000, the Electoral Assistance Division signed a memorandum of understanding with IDEA. This memorandum serves as a framework agreement for further collaboration in research, technical meetings and fieldwork. The Division participated in a variety of meetings organized by IDEA, including a conference held in Botswana in May 2000 on electoral management issues, the role of political parties and women's participation in the political process, and a conference held at Stockholm in June 2001 on information technology and elections.

23. The Electoral Assistance Division has further strengthened its role within the Partnership for Electoral and Democratic Development, composed also of Elections Canada, the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and IDEA. The partnership has completed a comprehensive project on participation in the Guatemalan elections. Several additional projects have since been initiated or are under discussion, including a second global meeting of representatives of regional associations of electoral administrators.

24. Outside the framework of the Partnership, collaboration with various electoral institutions has expanded. In particular, cooperation with the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico was strengthened. The Electoral Assistance Division has been able to draw on the Institute's high-level expertise in various operations (e.g., East Timor, Peru and Zimbabwe). Joint policy seminars have been conducted on a wide range of electoral issues.

25. Building on the excellent partnership developed in the framework of the popular consultation in East Timor in 1999, collaboration with the Australian

Electoral Commission has continued. A strategic capacity-building project has been established jointly to provide countries with customized training programmes on electoral administration that are currently being tested in East Timor. With the increase in the activities of the Electoral Assistance Division in Southern Asian and Pacific regions, it is likely that cooperation with the Australian Electoral Commission will broaden in the very near future.

26. The International Organization for Migration continued its work with the United Nations by conducting registration outside Kosovo for the municipal elections of 28 October 2000. Based on separate memoranda of understanding with the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and OSCE, the International Organization for Migration conducted a two-phase registration process that assisted potential voters in 35 countries. Following the elections, it undertook a comprehensive evaluation of its role in that electoral process.

III. Experience of the United Nations

27. During the reporting period, 47 requests were received from 37 Member States. Taking into account activities initiated in prior years and requests for advisory services, the Electoral Assistance Division undertook 53 project activities. In several cases, Member States requested more than one type of assistance. Confirming the trend identified in the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/54/491), requests for technical assistance to electoral commissions for the organization of specific electoral processes were numerous. The level of complexity and longer-term aspects of these projects, however, has required more intense involvement from the Electoral Assistance Division than was necessary in the past.

28. Although each request is carefully considered, a number of requests for assistance must be turned down each year. It may be helpful to indicate why this occurs. Many times a request for electoral assistance arrives a week or two before the election, too late for proper assistance to be provided. Requests must be received at least four months in advance of an election to allow proper consideration by the focal point. In some cases, the needs-assessment mission finds that the conditions for an open and transparent election are lacking and a recommendation is made against the provision of assistance. In other cases, requests are received for United Nations observers; only in rare instances does the Organization provide such assistance, for which a mandate has to be given to the United Nations by the General Assembly or the Security Council. Finally, in some cases the Government may not accept the type of assistance offered by the United Nations. In an effort to clarify the procedures for requesting electoral assistance, a note verbale will be transmitted to all Member States in the second half of 2001 providing the necessary information.

29. The Division has developed a series of seven new programme activities in order better to respond to new requests from Member States, as well as from partners in the United Nations system. The types of assistance provided are often closely linked and therefore cannot always be specifically defined as one particular category of assistance. The new activities are illustrated below, together with examples from major United Nations assistance projects in recent and ongoing election operations.

A. Pre-assistance activities

1. Expert advisory services

30. Expert advisory services are provided by the Electoral Assistance Division in response to the growing demand from within the United Nations system for electoral advice. Such advice is normally requested by resident coordinators or special representatives of the Secretary-General at a very early stage, in the context of United Nations activities such as conflict prevention, peacekeeping, post-conflict peace-building, development and democratic transitions. The goal is to ensure that United Nations representatives in the field get consistent policy advice on electoral matters in situations in which Member States have indicated an interest in obtaining United Nations electoral assistance.

31. In this context, for example, the Electoral Assistance Division provided an electoral expert for the United Nations facilitation team based at Arusha for the Burundi peace talks in May 2000, and experts were dispatched to Bangladesh and Guyana to provide early support to the resident coordinators regarding the possible provision of electoral assistance in 2001. With regard to Sierra Leone, a mission was fielded by the Electoral Assistance Division in support of the mission

sent by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to monitor the electoral environment and establish benchmarks for measuring progress being made towards elections. In response to a request from the UNDP office at Phnom Penh, an expert was sent to Cambodia in 2000 to review the election laws prior to the holding of communal elections in 2001. A mission is planned by the Division for East Timor following the August 2001 elections in order to discuss the next phase of electoral development with the Special Representative and senior UNTAET mission staff. Missions were also dispatched by the Division to Bangladesh and Guyana to provide early support to the resident coordinators regarding the possible provision of electoral assistance in 2001.

2. Needs-assessment missions

32. In responding to requests for assistance, the Electoral Assistance Division is responsible for the initial assessment of the electoral and political environment for the conduct of elections. Following a formal governmental request for assistance, terms of reference for a needs-assessment mission are agreed with the Government and a mission is sent to the requesting country. In the majority of such cases a political officer of the Division, often accompanied by one or more technical experts, visits the country for between 7 and 10 days in order to discuss plans for elections and to ascertain the environment in which the elections will take place. Upon returning to Headquarters, the team submits a report to the focal point, containing recommendations on United Nations involvement. A decision as to whether or not to provide assistance and the type of assistance to be provided will be taken by the focal point on that basis. If the Government chooses to accept the assistance offered by the United Nations, a project document is prepared, appropriate experts are identified from the roster and resource mobilization is initiated.

33. Political affairs officers of the Electoral Assistance Division, together with electoral experts, carried out 38 needs-assessment missions during the past biennium. In cases where an electoral assistance project is completed and a new project is requested, a mission will be conducted to ensure a current assessment of existing conditions and specific new needs. In Peru, for example, the provision of process assistance throughout the 2001 election cycle led to a request for further technical assistance. A needs-assessment mission will be conducted prior to the initiation of a new phase of assistance. In preparing for the August 2001 elections in East Timor, three such missions were conducted to ensure the necessary preparations for each stage of the process. Information on the conduct of needs-assessment missions during the biennium is contained in annex I to the present report.

B. Electoral assistance activities

1. Observation and monitoring of elections

34. Observation of an election takes several forms: (a) coordination and support for international observers provided by Member States; (b) provision of United Nations observers for observation; (c) expert monitoring of electoral processes; and (d) provision of support for domestic observation and monitoring.

35. Over the past biennium, the United Nations provided its more traditional coordination and support for international observers in Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, the Niger, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. In four of the five cases, technical assistance to the electoral commission was also provided. In a number of cases, particularly in the OAS and OSCE regions, the United Nations referred requests for observation assistance to the relevant regional organization and concentrated on the provision of technical assistance to the national electoral commission. Such a division of labour in the provision of international assistance is designed to ensure coordinated and more comprehensive support for the electoral process.

36. Although the United Nations most frequently provides coordination and support for international observers, the Organization sometimes provides electoral observers, as was the case in 2001 when, at the request of the caretaker Government of the Republic of Fiji, the General Assembly, by resolution 58/280 of 25 July 2001, decided to authorize the Secretary-General to establish the United Nations Fiji Electoral Observer Mission which observed the general elections held from 25 August to 1 September 2001 and the immediate post-election environment. Forty observers were deployed to Mission, including United Nations staff members and observers from Member States.

37. A technical observation was undertaken in the context of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan, assigned to monitor the elections held in 2000. Observation of the elections was conducted jointly with observers from OSCE, who covered selected polling stations. A series of technical observation reports, prepared during various phases of the electoral process, highlighted the interrelatedness of the various electoral components, including their impact on such electoral priorities as enfranchisement, access and security. The resultant technical reports provided clear guidance for future improvement of the electoral process.

38. With regard to domestic observation, the United Nations was requested in November 1999 to assist with the observation of the general elections held in Mexico in July 2000. The United Nations provided a technical team to assist with training and logistics and deployment advice and to facilitate briefings and debriefings. Similar assistance was provided for the elections held in Chiapas in August 2000, owing to the complex political environment in that state.

39. Looking ahead, plans are currently being readied for the international observation of elections in Sierra Leone. Such assistance will be provided in the context of UNAMSIL, as requested by the National Electoral Commission. It is anticipated that elections will be held in spring 2002.

2. Process assistance

40. Process assistance focuses on providing expert advice for the introduction of new systems, or the upgrading or streamlining of existing ones, and consists of expert advice that identifies options, analyses comparative advantage and makes recommendations regarding suitability and implications for other electoral processes. As requested, experts may work with electoral administrators and staff to ensure effective training and implementation of the new system.

41. In December 2000, the United Nations was formally requested to assist the Government of Peru in preparing for presidential elections scheduled for April 2001. Based on the recommendations of a needs-assessment mission, and after thorough consultations were held with OAS, the United Nations established a technical assistance mission in Peru to provide high-level advice to the National Office of Electoral Processes and to coordinate all international technical assistance provided for the elections. The primary elements of the technical programme included: (a) provision of direct support with planning; (b) logistics; (c) civic education; and (d) quality control of computer software systems. The experts began their work in early February 2001 and remained through the second round of the elections held in June 2001. The Mission also coordinated international assistance provided by the Centre for Electoral Assistance and Promotion, the Federal Elections Institute of Mexico and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. In accordance with the practice established by the United Nations and OAS, the latter organized the international observation of both rounds of elections.

42. As preparations begin for the holding of elections in Sierra Leone, increased support will be provided to the National Electoral Commission, particularly as regards logistics and the technical aspects of the electoral process. UNAMSIL will also assist with the provision of security throughout the election period and an elections unit will be created within UNAMSIL at an appropriate time.

3. Capacity-building

43. A long-term goal of United Nations electoral assistance has been the development of indigenous ability to conduct credible and economical elections. Capacity-building aims at developing and enhancing the knowledge and skills of electoral administrators and staff at the regional, national or local level in the design, planning and autonomous implementation of an electoral process.

44. Most capacity-building projects are longer-term projects where a strategic partnership is needed between the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP. UNDP, with a strong governance mandate, generally provides seed funding for these projects and works closely with the Division in the selection of experts and monitoring of project activities. For example, an innovative project of post-election capacity-building is currently being implemented by UNDP in Nigeria.

4. Institution-building

45. Expert advice is provided on the creation or revision of key institutional components of electoral management, which may include preparation and/or review of electoral laws and procedures, and the

structure and organization of electoral commissions and administrative offices. The goal is to assist in the creation of institutions that are integrated and supportive of effective electoral processes.

46. As in the case of capacity-building, longer-term institution-building in the field of governance has been an area of concentration of UNDP and a prime area of cooperation between UNDP and the Electoral Assistance Division. The Division has provided backstopping and high-level technical experts from its roster to implement long-term projects for institution-building in the electoral field. In Yemen, for example, UNDP and the Division are working jointly on a project to strengthen the Supreme Elections Council. In Pakistan, they are working closely on a three-year project to strengthen the electoral commission and facilitate its decentralization. In Nigeria, the communications component of the assistance currently being provided to the Independent National Electoral Commission offers a further example of institution-building in cooperation with UNDP. In Cambodia, through a UNDP technical assistance project, The Division is supporting the national commission to prepare the commune elections planned for early 2002.

5. System architecture

47. System architecture is the most comprehensive type of assistance and requires the careful analysis and design of electoral systems and processes to ensure their consistency with the political and legal framework, appropriate representation of political parties, and the integration of those systems and processes within the broader political environment. The goal of such assistance is to ensure that the new electoral elements are consistent and compatible with existing political and social structures, cultural norms and traditions. The expertise provided draws upon past international electoral practice and experience, review of the existing socio-economic and political conditions in the country, comparative analyses of system and institutional options and careful sequencing of assistance.

48. In each comprehensive electoral operation, the Electoral Assistance Division needs to devise an electoral process that fits into the overall process of democratization taking place. As such, system architecture is used as a planning and design approach every time a major aspect of an electoral process is modified and/or overhauled. A comprehensive example is the case of East Timor. Preparations for the elections held in August 2001 provide the first comprehensive example of system architecture to date because of the broad mandate of the United Nations in building independent institutions that will play a leading role in the future country's independence. The United Nations was responsible not only for the conduct of elections in East Timor but for drafting the electoral laws and establishing appropriate mechanisms for the conduct of elections. The elections were to result in the selection of 88 members of a new Constituent Assembly that will be responsible for drafting and approving a constitution for an independent East Timor. These will be the first elections held since the popular consultation in 1999 that began East Timor's current transition towards independent statehood. Preparations for the elections were carefully synchronized with ongoing civilian and military activities of UNTAET.

C. Other activities undertaken in the previous biennium

49. During the past two years, the increased introduction of information technology into electoral work has been recognized as raising important policy questions for the international community. In order to assist Member States in making decisions regarding the implementation and applications of such technology for their electoral systems, the Electoral Assistance Division has remained at the forefront in the international and national debates on these issues. Furthermore, the Division has upgraded its technological capacity through the recruitment of two specialized staff and participated in several international meetings to discuss plans for a potential Internet portal for electoral research, policy alternatives for the use of computer technologies in elections, policy implications of norms, standards and sustainability of information technology in elections, and research and development of international standards for the use of new technologies in elections.

50. A conference on standards and methodologies for international electoral observation is planned for 2002. An initial planning meeting of the conference steering committee was held in New York in August 2001. Members of the steering committee include the Electoral Assistance Division, the Commonwealth Secretariat, OAS, the OSCE Office for Democracy and Human Rights and the National Democratic Institute.

The planning meeting will focus on methodologies for electoral observation and elaboration of norms, practices and standards for assessing the genuineness of elections. A major goal of the conference is to achieve a common understanding of standards for observation, thereby contributing to greater consistency in the conduct of international observation.

51. As requested by the General Assembly in resolution 46/137 of 17 December 1991, the Electoral Assistance Division maintains the only official roster of electoral experts for the United Nations system as a whole, thus permitting quality control in the electoral expertise provided by the United Nations. The constantly updated roster is fed by contributions from programmes and agencies of the United Nations system throughout the world, which draw on it according to their needs. The competencies of all experts are duly evaluated, compared and classified according to their main areas of technical expertise. After each operation, their performances are evaluated by the recipient agency and by the Division according to comprehensive criteria that ensure consistent quality in the experts recommended. With the increase in numbers of permanent national electoral commissions, professional electoral administrators and the growth of regional associations of such administrators, important additions to the roster have been made. At the same time, the Division is making plans to streamline its maintenance of the roster by computerizing the applications and employment records of experts. When the computerized system is in place, potential experts will be able to complete and submit an application form online and, through coded access, will be able to update their files electronically, thereby saving considerable time and money both for the experts and for the United Nations.

52. The Electoral Assistance Division continues to provide statistics on United Nations electoral assistance activities on an annual basis. This consolidated list is available upon request. Information on electoral assistance activities during the period from 1 October 1999 through 31 July 2001 is provided in annex I.

D. Challenges

53. Two major challenges in United Nations electoral assistance activities relate to coordination and availability of essential resources. Regarding coordination of activities, the needs lie both within and outside the United Nations system. The global coordination of activities undertaken by the United Nations system requires extensive and consistent reporting to the focal point for United Nations electoral assistance activities. To date, such reporting has sometimes been sporadic and the information provided incomplete and inconsistent. Efforts must be made to ensure regular and comprehensive reporting in standardized formats. Such reporting will contribute to more effective quality control of electoral assistance projects and enhanced post-project evaluation and record keeping.

54. Owing to the strategic importance of the partnership between the Secretariat of the United Nations and the resident coordinator system maintained by UNDP, considerable progress has been made in ensuring coordination at an early stage of activities by both organizations. Of special importance has been the issuance of the note of guidance for resident coordinators and resident representatives, which clearly spells out the shared responsibilities in the field of electoral assistance. In the light of the new guidelines it is hoped that coordination problems, especially at the field level, will be avoided in the future.

55. A larger challenge relates to the availability of human and financial resources sufficient to respond to requests for electoral assistance in a timely and effective manner. The Electoral Assistance Division faces an acute staff shortage, given the continuing increase in demands for electoral assistance. An important consideration is not only the number of requests received by the Division in a given year, but the complexity and duration of particular projects. In some cases, particularly when elections take place in the context of larger peacekeeping operations, such as East Timor or Sierra Leone, it is important to assign a staff member to the portfolio on a full-time basis. Preparations for such elections may take from six to nine months and, for East Timor, preparations took two years. In other cases, such as electoral assistance to Nigeria, the project began in 1998 with the coordination of observers for the 1998-1999 electoral cycle and continued to the present. For complex technical operations, such as in Peru, a senior staff member of the Division must be posted to the country to head the United Nations operation for up to six months to handle the coordination and implementation of United Nations assistance. The human resource

demands of many assistance projects are therefore substantial and impossible to predict.

56. It is expected that the electoral components of United Nations operations planned during the forthcoming biennium (Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and possibly Angola), may overtax the Division's human resource capacity by approximately 30 per cent. Combined with the need to undertake various types of shorter-term missions (expert advisory services, needs-assessment missions and monitoring), the Electoral Assistance Division functions at times with less than 50 per cent of its staff at Headquarters. The desire of Member States for long-term assistance suggests that the value derived from sustained international support for electoral institutions and processes; it also highlights the limited availability of the human resources in the Secretariat that are essential to fulfilling this task.

57. The Panel on United Nations Peace Operations recommended that regular budget resources for the programmatic expenses of the Electoral Assistance Division should be substantially increased to meet the rapidly growing demand for its services in lieu of voluntary contributions (A/55/305-S/2000/809, para. 243 (b)). In the light of the recommendation, the core resources of the Division have slightly increased, but it continues to rely largely on voluntary contributions to its Trust Fund for Electoral Observation to finance its activities. As at 30 June 2001, the balance in the Trust Fund was approximately $1 million, of which 90 per cent was earmarked for a postponed electoral operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the remaining 10 per cent was available for use at the discretion of the Division. By the end of 2001, the non-earmarked funds will be almost totally depleted. This may result in the Electoral Assistance Division being forced to decline assistance due to a lack of sufficient funds. Non-earmarked funds are essential for financing core activities of the Division that cannot be funded by its regular budget, despite the measured increase provided by Member States following the recommendations of the above-mentioned Panel.

58. Needs-assessment missions are the first critical component in the provision of electoral assistance, providing the basis for a decision as to whether or not assistance will be provided. The number of missions required in a given year cannot be predicted or controlled, since it is determined by the requests of Member States. Non-earmarked funding is also essential for project start-up, since in-country resource mobilization takes considerable time, which may not be met by decreasing core resources available within UNDP. When a request is received relatively late, assistance must be initiated as soon as possible if it is to have a positive effect. Owing to staff constraints in the Electoral Assistance Division, very little time has been devoted to the resource mobilization effort that is now needed. Staff members are currently handling an average of seven simultaneous operations each and cannot devote time to other activities.

IV. Reflections for future activity

59. United Nations electoral assistance is now provided to Member States that have widely varying experiences with elections and stand at very different stages in their democratic development. In most cases, requests for electoral assistance are received from Member States that have already conducted several cycles of elections. In such cases, the demand is largely for technical assistance in specific areas. In countries undergoing political transition, however, old systems may have to be modified and adapted to address new political realities. Mexico and Peru took significant steps towards democratic change in the period 2000-2001; Cambodia, Nigeria and Yemen are continuing with democratic transitions that were initiated earlier. East Timor is undergoing a full-fledged transition to statehood. There is no standardized formula for successful democratization and no established timetable. The potential for setbacks is real. Electoral assistance must therefore be flexible and focused not only on immediate electoral priorities but on the longer-term implications and the broader political and electoral environment.

60. In responding to the diverse needs of its Member States, the United Nations continues to rely heavily on needs-assessment missions which evaluate current conditions in the requesting country. Increased coordination with relevant desk officers, particularly in the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNDP, is essential to ensuring proper preparation for needs-assessment missions and their final recommendations. Increased collaboration throughout the United Nations system will contribute to early, carefully phased assistance and to greater understanding of the need for an integrated and organic approach. This is particularly true in cases

of elections organized as part of a larger peacekeeping operation: electoral processes must be synchronized with disarmament, returns of refugees and displaced persons, reconciliation and other activities essential for a return to peaceful life. Past United Nations experience is an invaluable guide for future United Nations activities. The collection of information from within the system must therefore be standardized and streamlined during the coming biennium.

61. A new concern of the United Nations in its provision of electoral assistance is the assessment of new technology and its value to Member States in the conduct of elections. By developing a technological capacity within the Organization, the United Nations can advise Member States as to technologies appropriate to their particular needs. Together with several partners, the Electoral Assistance Division is participating in the current research on and discussion of applications of technology in elections and the establishment of standards for its use. New information technology offers important opportunities for greater and more equal global access to information; it also poses challenges to traditional concerns of security and privacy. In future electoral assistance projects, the United Nations will seek to ensure cost-efficient and sustainable uses of such technology, appropriate to the requesting State.

62. Several years ago, many anticipated that United Nations electoral assistance might be a temporary activity that would be phased out as Member States developed the capacity to organize and conduct legitimate electoral. Certainly the work of national electoral administrators and electoral commissions has acquired considerable credibility with voters over the past decade. The number of requests received by the United Nations, however, does not suggest a decline in the need for electoral assistance. Significant and sometimes subtle changes are keeping the numbers of requests high.

63. Elections are intricately related to vital aspects of political and social life. As these change, the context for elections may improve or deteriorate; this is part of a natural and not necessarily linear process of democratic development. The United Nations will remain ready to assist, coordinating with partners and dedicated to providing the best possible support for sincere efforts towards democratic development.

Annex I

Summary of electoral assistance activities, 1 October 1999-31 July 2001

Albania

Based on a request received in 1999, the United Nations provided technical assistance to the electoral authorities in Albania through a project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project was designed to address the long-standing problem of voter registration and the establishment of an accurate and computerized voters' list. The project also included the establishment of a data centre to help in managing the elections, and the production and distribution of voter identification cards for the 2001 parliamentary elections. Elections were held in October 2000 and on 24 June 2001.

Angola

In July 2001, the Electoral Assistance Division joined an inter-agency task force established in pursuance of consultations held with the Government of Angola. The task force is to follow current developments in the country and evaluate possibilities for United Nations cooperation on: (a) the implementation of pilot projects related to demobilized soldiers and internally displaced persons; (b) the mobilization of resources for a fund for peace and reconciliation; and (c) plans for holding elections in the second half of 2002.

Armenia

In May 2000, the Electoral Assistance Division received a request through UNDP in Armenia for assistance in undertaking a training seminar for journalists on electoral processes as part of the larger project on the provision of support to democracy and good governance. The Division assisted the project by providing technical materials on media training and refugee voting.

Azerbaijan

In August 2000, the United Nations received a request to send observers for the Milli Majlis (National Assembly) elections of 6 November 2000. The United Nations deferred to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in keeping with established practice regarding cooperation with regional organizations as the lead organizations in electoral observation.

Bangladesh

In March 2001, the Electoral Commission of Bangladesh requested the United Nations to coordinate and support international observer delegations invited for the general elections that were to be held in October 2001. Pursuant to the recommendations of a needs-assessment mission, the Electoral Assistance Division is currently identifying a team of experts to undertake that task.

In addition, the United Nations has since 1997 been providing technical assistance to the Bangladesh Electoral Commission through a UNDP project. If approved by the focal point for electoral assistance, UNDP will also provide administrative and logistical services to the European Union Electoral Observation Mission for the October elections.

Belarus

In August 2000, the United Nations received an invitation for international observers to be assigned to the parliamentary elections held on 15 October 2000. In keeping with established practice regarding cooperation with regional organizations as the lead organizations in electoral observation, the United Nations informed the Government that OSCE was already present in the country.

Benin

In 2001, in connection with the presidential elections of 4 March 2001 (second round on 22 March 2001), the Electoral Assistance Division provided advisory services to UNDP, and recommended that UNDP provide financial and limited technical support for the electoral process.

Burundi (negotiations at Arusha)

In the context of the Arusha peace process related to the conflict in Burundi, the facilitation team requested the services of an electoral expert to advise it on electoral processes, including the different stages of organization, electoral law and options for the selection of an electoral system. In May 2000, the Electoral Assistance Division provided an expert to the facilitation team based at Arusha.

Cambodia

In 2000, the UNDP Office at Phnom Penh requested expert advisory services from the Electoral Assistance Division in regard to the review of the electoral law in Cambodia. The Division continued to provide expert advisory assistance throughout 2000 in preparation for the commune elections scheduled for 2001.

In February 2001 the Government of Cambodia requested technical assistance for the elections, currently scheduled for February 2002.

In June 2001, the Electoral Assistance Division sent a needs-assessment mission to the country, which recommended that the United Nations support the Electoral Commission of Cambodia through a UNDP project, the activities of which would include coordination of financial contributions and technical assistance.

Cameroon

Following his visit to Cameroon in May 2000, the Secretary-General wrote to the President of Cameroon and informed him that he had requested UNDP to work with the Department of Political Affairs and the Electoral Assistance Division to provide support for institution-building, training, preparation of electoral legislation and assistance with registration as the Government prepares for the elections planned for 2001. The Division is closely monitoring the preparations for the first round of municipal elections, scheduled for 2002.

Chad

In April 2000, the United Nations received a letter from the Government of Chad requesting assistance for the presidential, legislative and local elections planned for 2001. In November 2000, the Electoral Assistance Division dispatched a needs-assessment mission to Chad, resulting in the establishment of a technical support unit of two experts to advise the Electoral Commission of Chad in preparing for the presidential elections held on 20 May 2001.

Comoros

In August 2000, the Secretary-General received a request from the Government of the Comoros requesting technical and financial assistance for the electoral process. Subsequent to a further request received in May 2001, the Electoral Assistance Division sent a needs-assessment mission to the country in June 2001. The United Nations is currently considering the type of assistance to be provided. Elections are tentatively scheduled for the end of 2001 or early in 2002.

Congo

In March 2001, the Government of the Congo requested United Nations electoral assistance for elections scheduled in 2002. Subsequently, the United Nations and the Government agreed that a United Nations mission should be conducted to evaluate the situation on the ground so as to formulate the most appropriate assistance. The Electoral Assistance Division is currently preparing the mission.

Côte d'Ivoire

In March 2000, the Electoral Assistance Division dispatched a needs-assessment mission to Abidjan, in

response to an official request for United Nations electoral assistance from the President of Côte d'Ivoire. Consequently, a UNDP technical project was initiated which included technical assistance to the Electoral Commission and creation of an electoral assistance secretariat to coordinate international observers. On 13 October 2000, the United Nations decided to cease its coordination role owing to political events in the country. Limited technical assistance continued to be given for the legislative elections held on 10 December 2000.

East Timor

In July 2000, as part of the preparations for East Timor's constitutional development and elections, a mission was dispatched to East Timor to conduct a technical needs assessment, evaluate the capacity of local and regional actors, and prepare an initial planning document for the development of East Timor's electoral capacity. The mission also held in-depth discussions with East Timorese leaders and civil society to ensure that the mission's recommendations would reflect the desire of the East Timorese. In this regard, it was necessary to ensure that East Timorese expectations were realistic within the relatively short time frame that was proposed for the transition to independence, while not compromising the integrity and credibility of the constitution-making and electoral processes.

In early October 2000, the United Nations sent the first electoral experts to East Timor to establish the electoral component of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). Two teams were dispatched: an electoral systems education team and an advance planning and design team. Their main tasks were to design the structure of the electoral management body in charge of preparing and conducting the elections, develop a comprehensive operational plan for the conduct of the 2001 elections, design a capacity-building programme and establish the basis for a voter education and information programme.

The electoral component of UNTAET was fully staffed in March 2001. In May 2001, the Secretary-General appointed Bong-Souk Sohn, Charles Rose, Michael Maley, Jacinta Correia da Silva and Armindo Maia as the five members of the Independent Electoral Commission of East Timor.

The elections for the Constituent Assembly in East Timor were held on 30 August 2001.

Equatorial Guinea

On 29 April 2000, the Secretary-General received a request from the Government of Equatorial Guinea for United Nations observers to be assigned to the municipal elections to be held on 28 May 2000. The United Nations was unable to fulfil the Government's request owing to the short lead time.

Fiji

In June 2001, the caretaker Government of Fiji sent a letter to the Secretary-General, requesting the participation of the United Nations in the observation of the general elections scheduled to be held during the week of 25 August to 1 September 2001.

In June 2001, the Electoral Assistance Division sent a needs-assessment mission to Fiji, and on 25 July 2001 the General Assembly adopted resolution 55/280, in which it authorized the Secretary-General to establish the United Nations Fiji Electoral Observer Mission to monitor the general elections in Fiji and the immediate post-election environment.

UNDP is providing technical support to the electoral authorities for the establishment of a media centre, coordination of donor activities and civic education and is coordinating the appointment of international observers.

Gambia

In November 2000, a multidisciplinary mission was dispatched to assess the overall political situation in the Gambia. The mission included senior officers from the Department of Political Affairs, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, United Nations Environment Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Based on its findings, the mission recommended the establishment of a framework team and a comprehensive inter-agency working methodology.

In March 2001, the United Nations received a request for electoral assistance for the 2001

presidential and 2002 National Assembly elections. The Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs-assessment mission in June 2001. Further involvement is currently under consideration.

Ghana

In May 2000, UNDP informed the Electoral Assistance Division that the Government had requested UNDP assistance for the coordination of donor contributions for the 2000 electoral process. Assistance was provided under a UNDP project. The presidential and parliamentary elections were held on 7 December 2000.

Guatemala

In May 1999, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Guatemala requested the support of the Partnership for Electoral and Democratic Development in observing and evaluating electoral participation in the Guatemalan national elections of December 1999, by means of a consolidated study consisting of 15 components. With the approval of the focal point for electoral assistance, the Electoral Assistance Division financed three components of the project: (a) the development of databases of registered citizens who had voted or had not voted in November 1999 elections, including their age, gender, educational level and residence; (b) the development of a national poll on participation and on the impact of activities aimed at the promotion of participation; and (c) the development of focus group studies on electoral participation.

Guinea

In May 2000, the Government of Guinea requested, through UNDP, financial assistance for the communal, legislative and communautaire elections scheduled for June, November and December 2000, respectively. The Electoral Assistance Division subsequently dispatched a needs-assessment mission to Guinea in July 2000 to define the most appropriate type of United Nations assistance. Owing to subsequent political and military developments involving the bordering countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone, United Nations assistance to the electoral process was put on hold.

Guinea-Bissau

On 6 April 1999 the Security Council by resolution 1233 (1999), expressed its support for the establishment of the Post-conflict Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, to be headed by a representative of the Secretary-General. Electoral experts selected by the Electoral Assistance Division were assigned to the Office to advise the Representative of the Secretary-General on electoral matters.

At the request of the Government, the United Nations provided, through UNDP project GBS/97/007, technical assistance for the various stages of the 1999 electoral process and coordinated the international observation of the elections. The first round of the presidential elections was held on 28 November 1999.

For the second round of elections held on 16 January 2000, the United Nations also coordinated the international observation, and provided the necessary logistics throughout the course of the elections and assistance to the National Electoral Commission in the counting and tabulation of the ballots.

Subsequently, in May 2000, the Government of Guinea-Bissau requested the United Nations to continue to provide its technical assistance to the electoral authorities in connection with the local elections scheduled then for 2001 but still not officially announced. Accordingly, an electoral expert was sent to assist the Electoral Commission in November 2000.

Guyana

At the request of UNDP, the Electoral Assistance Division sent an expert advisory mission to Guyana in May 2000 to assess the need for United Nations assistance. The Government of Guyana subsequently sent an official request, and the United Nations provided technical assistance to the Electoral Commission and coordination and support for international observers through a UNDP project. Municipal elections were held in March 2001. The Electoral Assistance Division made a preliminary evaluation of the project immediately after the elections.

Haiti

Two electoral consultants were deployed to Haiti, under UNDP project HAI/99/008, to assist the Provisional Electoral Commission in preparing for the elections initially scheduled for November and December 1999 but subsequently held in May and June 2000. In addition, 13 United Nations volunteers were deployed to work with the officials of the Commission. The project continued until the end of September 2000 pending improvement in the political crisis in the country, but assistance was suspended in early October 2000. Three technical review missions were undertaken in Haiti by staff of the Electoral Assistance Division during 2000.

Honduras

In June 2001, the National Electoral Court of Honduras requested the United Nations for technical assistance in the areas of training, logistics, voter education and vote counting in connection with the general elections scheduled for 25 November 2001. The Electoral Assistance Division sent a needs-assessment mission to the country in August 2001.

Kosovo

In January 2000, the Electoral Assistance Division participated in an evaluation mission to Kosovo. The mission's purpose was to discuss and assess the existing conditions and preliminary plans for civil and voter registration in the area administered by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, his senior staff, OSCE staff and other relevant officials. The mission also reviewed the institutional arrangements among UNMIK, OSCE and KFOR related to the organization and supervision of civil and voter registration, and analysed potential implications insofar as the overall role of UNMIK in Kosovo. The mission prepared a report for the Department of Political Affairs/Electoral Assistance Division and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which made several recommendations regarding the regulation on the civil registry. Throughout 2000 and 2001, the Division continued to provide expert advisory support to UNMIK in all aspects related to elections, and two subsequent missions were undertaken to Kosovo at crucial phases of the electoral process. Local elections took place on 28 October 2000.

Lesotho

A Senior Political Affairs Officer from the Electoral Assistance Division travelled to Maseru in May 2000 to discuss the preparation of the next parliamentary elections in Lesotho and to explore the possibility and extent of United Nations involvement in the electoral process. By assessing the progress made by all parties with regard to the upcoming election, the mission was able to outline the available electoral options to the relevant officials.

A formal request for financial and technical assistance was received by the United Nations in April 2001. A second mission was sent to the country in May 2001, and the United Nations is currently considering the recommendations of the mission. General elections are scheduled for 2002.

Mauritania

In April 2001, the United Nations received a request for assistance in connection with the upcoming parliamentary and municipal elections to be held in Mauritania on 19 October 2001. The request was withdrawn in June 2001.

Mexico

In November 1999, in preparation for the presidential and legislative elections of 2 July 2000, the Foreign Minister of Mexico requested United Nations support for the domestic observers and foreign visitors (international observers) component of the electoral process. A team was sent to Mexico in May 2000 for that purpose.

The United Nations was also requested to provide the same type of assistance for the elections held in Chiapas on 20 August 2000.

Mozambique

In 1999, pursuant to a request received from the Government of Mozambique, a senior officer from the

Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs-assessment mission to the country and assisted in revising a UNDP project for the provision of technical assistance to the electoral authorities. The elections were held from 3 to 5 December 1999.

Namibia

In October 1999, the UNDP office in Namibia informed the Electoral Assistance Division that the Government had invited several countries and international organizations, including UNDP, to send observers to the general elections of 30 November and 1 December 1999. As a result, in mid-October 1999, a senior officer from the Division was sent to Namibia to conduct a needs-assessment mission. Owing to the lack of time to prepare for a more substantive role, the officer recommended that UNDP provide limited assistance, which included the printing of materials for the international observers.

Netherland Antilles

Following a 1999 request from the Referendum Committee of Sint Marteen, a senior officer from the Electoral Assistance Division was sent to the island for consultation and planning of the information campaign for the referendum of 23 June 2000. The same officer returned to Sint Marteen in June 2000 to wind up the support of the Division for the referendum and remained throughout the polling period to represent the United Nations.

Nicaragua

In May 2000, the United Nations received a request from the Government of Nicaragua to send United Nations observers for the municipal elections to be held on 5 November 2000. The United Nations was unable to fulfil the request since observation activities were deferred to the Organization of American States (OAS), the lead organization in the region. Instead, technical monitoring was provided on key electoral legal issues throughout the pre-election period.

In April 2001, the United Nations received another request to send observers for the elections scheduled for 4 November 2001. Accordingly, the United Nations sent a needs-assessment mission to Nicaragua at the end of May 2001. The recommendations of the mission are currently under consideration.

Niger

Following a request received in mid-1999, the United Nations provided assistance to the Niger under UNDP project NER/97/001. The project included the provision of technical assistance to the Electoral Commission, as well as coordination of international observers. Two consultants were recruited under the project. Presidential elections were held on 17 October and 24 November 1999, and legislative elections on 24 November 1999.

Nigeria

In July 2000, the post-electoral assistance project in Nigeria was formally approved by the focal point for electoral assistance activities, pursuant to a needs-assessment mission conducted by the Electoral Assistance Division in May 2000. The project consists of three main components: (a) strengthening the institutional capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria through training; (b) strengthening the institutional capacity of the Commission in civic education and communication; and (c) bridging the gap by strengthening civil society as regards democracy.

Pakistan

In August 2000, at the invitation of UNDP, the Electoral Assistance Division conducted an advisory mission to Pakistan. The objectives of the mission were to assess the political climate in Pakistan, to review the status of the UNDP-sponsored project for electoral assistance to Pakistan, to assess the need for assistance to the Electoral Commission of Pakistan, and to make the appropriate recommendations. A project document for electoral assistance was subsequently signed in September 2000, and a follow-up mission to review the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the report was conducted in April/May 2001.

Peru

In December 2000, the Government of Peru requested the Secretary-General for assistance in preparing for the general elections of 8 April 2001. The Electoral Assistance Division dispatched a needs-assessment mission to the country with a view to determining the most appropriate type of assistance that the United Nations might provide. Based on the recommendations of the mission, the United Nations established a technical assistance programme through UNDP, which provided technical expertise to the National Office of Electoral Processes. The Division conducted several missions to Peru until the end of the electoral process in June 2001 in order to follow the progress of the project.

Romania

In May 2000, the United Nations received an enquiry from the Permanent Mission of Romania regarding international observers for the local elections of 4 June 2000. Owing to the lack of lead time, the United Nations was unable to fulfil the Government's request.

Rwanda

In February 2001, the Government of Rwanda requested United Nations assistance with preparations for the municipal elections of 6 March 2001. The Electoral Assistance Division sent a needs-assessment mission to the country and, based on its recommendations, the United Nations provided technical assistance and coordination of electoral observers under the provisions of a UNDP project.

Sao Tome and Principe

In October 2000 the United Nations received a request for electoral support to the presidential elections to be held in 2001. In February 2001, a needs-assessment mission was sent to the country and a UNDP project was subsequently implemented, under which the United Nations provided technical assistance to the Electoral Commission of Sao Tome and Principe for the presidential elections of 29 July 2001.

Sierra Leone

The Security Council, by resolution 1270 (1999) of 22 October 1999, decided to establish the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) with the mandate, inter alia, to "provide support, as requested, to the elections, which are to be held in accordance with the present constitution of Sierra Leone". In May 2001, a staff member from the Electoral Assistance Division was dispatched to Freetown to discuss with the Government and all other relevant parties in Sierra Leone, including the donor community, the appropriate level of involvement of the United Nations system and the eventual logistical requirements for the upcoming elections. The Division is currently preparing the operational plan for the electoral component of Sierra Leone.

Senegal

In December 1999, the Government of Senegal sent a letter to the Secretary-General in which it requested that observers be assigned to the presidential elections of 27 February 2000. The United Nations was unable to fulfil the request but requested the Resident Coordinator to follow the electoral process and report on its conduct and outcome to the Secretary-General.

In March 2001, the Government of Senegal invited the United Nations to send observers to the legislative elections of 29 April 2001; the Resident Coordinator was again requested to follow and report on the electoral process.

South Africa

In May 2000, the Electoral Assistance Division sent a mission to South Africa to finalize a post-election assistance project coordinated by the Independent Electoral Commission at the end of 1999, to discuss the possibility of providing United Nations electoral assistance for the November 2000 local elections, and to review with representatives of the Southern African Development Community their most recent electoral experiences and draw lessons for future elections.

Sudan

On 24 October 2000, the Government of the Sudan invited the United Nations to send observers for the general and presidential elections to be held from 11 to 20 December 2000. In November 2000, a senior officer from the Electoral Assistance Division conducted a needs-assessment mission to the Sudan and presented a report. Owing to time constraints, the United Nations was unable to fulfil the request.

Suriname

In March 2000, at the request of UNDP, the Electoral Assistance Division dispatched an expert advisory services mission to Suriname to provide support to electoral assistance activities proposed by UNDP on behalf of the European Union for the elections of 25 May 2000. The mission advised the Resident Representative on electoral issues, such as electoral methodology, challenges and opportunities in coordinating international observers, and cost-efficiency issues.

Tajikistan

A United Nations expert electoral team was sent to Tajikistan from 13 February to 5 March 2000 to monitor the pre-polling state of readiness and developments during and after polling, and to make recommendations and establish performance benchmarks for measuring progress in the future. The mission was part of the Joint United Nations/OSCE observation mission to Tajikistan, and assessed what actions were taken by the Tajik electoral management body to put into practice the recommendations of the first three United Nations assessments. It also evaluated the state of readiness and preparation of the electoral authorities for the legislative elections of 27 February 2000, including the operational capacity of the electoral authorities. The mission was able to evaluate the state of registration and documentation, preparation of the voter list and criteria needed to establish the electoral map, and also evaluate the quality of training of poll workers, party representatives, the quality of the voter education campaign, and the registration process for candidates and political parties.

Togo

In 2000, the Electoral Assistance Division provided expert advisory services to the Resident Representative of UNDP at Lomé related to donor coordination and technical assistance in support of the UNDP electoral assistance project for the presidential elections scheduled for March 2001.

In June 2001, the United Nations received a request from the Government for assistance in the upcoming parliamentary election scheduled for 14 and 28 October 2001. In July 2001, the Electoral Assistance Division sent a needs-assessment mission to the country; its findings and recommendations are currently under consideration.

Uganda

In May 2000, the Government of Uganda invited United Nations observers to take part in the referendum on the political system to be held on 29 June 2000. The United Nations was unable to accept the invitation owing to the lack of lead time.

In February 2001, the United Nations received another invitation to send observers for the presidential elections of 7 March 2001. The United Nations was unable to accept the invitation again owing to lack of lead time.

United Republic of Tanzania

Following an April 2000 request from the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, the Electoral Assistance Division deployed a needs-assessment mission to the country in June 2000 to determine the exact role of the United Nations. Subsequently, the United Nations provided coordination and support for international observers. The elections were held on 29 October 2000.

Venezuela

In 2000, the United Nations received three separate requests from the Government of Venezuela to send observers. Two of the requests pertained to the general elections, initially scheduled for 28 May 2000 and subsequently postponed to 30 July 2000, and the

third related to the local elections of 3 December 2000. Owing to the lack of lead time, the United Nations was unable to fulfil the requests.

Yemen

Following a request for assistance received in April 2000, the United Nations dispatched a needs-assessment mission to Yemen in July 2000 and subsequently prepared a preparatory assistance project for the elections. Two electoral experts were deployed to Yemen for four months in 2001 to provide technical assistance in the preparation of the general elections to be held on 15 March 2001. The consultants also prepared a project document for long-term electoral assistance to the Supreme Election Commission.

Zambia

In September 2000, the United Nations received a request for technical assistance and coordination and support of international observers for the 2001 presidential and parliamentary elections. In February 2001, the Electoral Assistance Division dispatched a needs-assessment mission, which prepared a report. The elections are currently scheduled for November 2001 and further United Nations involvement is under consideration.

Zimbabwe

In November 1999, the Government of Zimbabwe requested United Nations technical assistance for legislative elections that were to take place in 2000 (unspecified date). In December 1999, the United Nations dispatched a needs-assessment mission to Harare, which was led by a senior officer of the Electoral Assistance Division and which presented a report containing several recommendations. In January 2000, the President of Zimbabwe officially announced that the legislative elections would be held in March 2000 with the possibility of a postponement of up to six months, as allowed by the Constitution. Subsequently, the Division dispatched a second needs-assessment mission to assess the feasibility of the proposed electoral calendar and the status of preparations for the polling exercise, to prepare contingency plans for United Nations assistance, and to evaluate the availability of resources from the donor community. A third mission was dispatched in December 2000 to assess the possibility of the United Nations coordinating the activities of international observers. Parliamentary elections were held on 24 and 25 June 2000.

Annex II

Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme: note of guidance on electoral assistance

Overview

1. Recognizing the need for strengthened system-wide coordination and implementation of electoral assistance activities, the present note is intended to clarify respective roles and standard procedures for the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the provision of electoral assistance to Member States and replaces all previous guidelines.

2. The United Nations system is engaged in a wide range of development assistance activities that are intended to support the efforts of Member States to promote democratic electoral processes and build sustainable capacity to manage electoral systems and processes. Member States most often request advice and assistance on the legal, institutional, technical and administrative aspects of organizing and conducting democratic elections or seek the Organization's assistance in supporting the international or domestic observation of electoral processes.

Objectives

3. The objectives of United Nations electoral assistance are two-fold:

(a) To assist Member States in their efforts to hold credible and legitimate elections in accordance with internationally recognized criteria;

(b) To contribute to building, in the recipient country, a sustainable institutional capacity to organize democratic elections that are genuine and periodic and have the full confidence of the contending parties and the electorate.

Roles and responsibilities within the United Nations system

4. In view of the increasing demand for electoral assistance and in order to ensure consistency in the handling of requests of Member States which were organizing elections, the General Assembly, in resolution 46/137 of 17 December 1991, took steps to create an institutional framework to support activities in this area and recognized and affirmed the role of each of the main United Nations electoral assistance actors:

(a) **Focal point for electoral assistance activities.** In accordance with Assembly resolution 46/137, the Secretary-General, in 1992 appointed a focal point for electoral assistance activities "to ensure consistency in the handling of requests of Member States organizing elections ... to channel requests for electoral assistance to the appropriate office or programme ... to build on experience gained to develop an institutional memory, to develop and maintain a roster of international experts ... and to maintain contact with regional and other intergovernmental organizations to ensure appropriate working arrangements with them and the avoidance of duplication of efforts". The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs serves as the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance;

(b) **Electoral Assistance Division.** The Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs was established in 1992, initially as the Electoral Assistance Unit, to provide technical support to the focal point in carrying out his functions. The main role of the Division is to evaluate requests for electoral assistance, to identify and maintain United Nations electoral standards, to undertake needs-assessment missions, to assist the organizations of the United Nations system and other organizations in the design of electoral assistance project activities, to develop operational strategies for electoral components of peacekeeping operations, to maintain a roster of electoral experts, to facilitate the international observation of elections and to serve as the institutional memory of the United Nations in the electoral field;

(c) **United Nations Development Programme.** The Assembly, by resolution 46/137, recognized the role of UNDP in the provision of technical assistance for electoral activities and underscored the importance

of collaboration among actors in the United Nations system. At the country level, UNDP plays a lead role in the provision of policy advice and programmes to strengthen sustainable democratic institutions and processes (e.g., electoral bodies, parliaments, judiciaries etc.). The emphasis of its role and interventions in the electoral area is on long-term capacity-building of electoral institutions and processes, including civil society awareness and participation. UNDP also plays a key role at the country level in the coordination of electoral assistance among donors and national and international actors. This includes both financial coordination involving the channelling of donor funds for electoral support as well as the coordination of electoral support through meetings and donor coordination forums. In most cases, when United Nations electoral assistance is provided to a country, the resident coordinator/resident representative represents the United Nations system in such an undertaking. At UNDP headquarters, the Bureau for Development Policy teams up with the regional bureau concerned to provide support for the priorities and needs identified at the country level, in close liaison with the Electoral Assistance Division.

Procedures for providing electoral assistance

5. Before the United Nations system can provide any type of electoral assistance, directly or on behalf of a third party such as a regional organization or other multilateral organization, the Organization must first carefully assess the pre-electoral conditions in the requesting country. It is essential to undertake such an assessment prior to any type of project commitment in order to ensure involvement only in settings in which legitimate elections are likely to be carried out. With this in mind, the procedure for obtaining United Nations electoral assistance is as follows:

(a) The Government or electoral authorities must send an official request for assistance to the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance at least four months prior to the scheduled election to allow for meaningful involvement. More lead time (6-8 months) would, however, reduce the costs and risks involved and provide for more thorough assistance, of better quality. The usual sources of requests are the national electoral authorities, the Office of the President or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

(b) The Electoral Assistance Division will consult with the resident coordinator/resident representative concerned, and the relevant divisions of the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP headquarters, among others, about whether pre-electoral conditions in the requesting country satisfy the established criteria for United Nations electoral assistance;

(c) If the focal point determines that a more thorough, on-site needs assessment is required before deciding whether to provide assistance, the Electoral Assistance Division, in cooperation with UNDP, will dispatch an assessment mission to evaluate the political, material and institutional situation in the requesting country. The mission will also assess the appropriateness, necessity and potential impact of United Nations assistance and ascertain whether the main contesting political parties and representatives of civil society support United Nations involvement;

(d) In the event the resident coordinator/resident representative deems it necessary and appropriate, prior to or following a formal request from the Government, he or she may request the Electoral Assistance Division to provide internal advice by dispatching an expert advisory mission. These are typically small, low-profile missions intended to provide early intervention and expert advice on coordination and operations of electoral assistance projects. An accurate and adequate assessment of the pre-electoral environment in countries seeking assistance will reduce the risk of associating the United Nations with elections whose organization and conduct do not adhere to internationally recognized criteria. It is, therefore, a critical factor in upholding the reputation of the United Nations as a credible, standard-setting institution in this field;

(e) Based on the above, the focal point will either approve or deem inappropriate a request for assistance. In the case of a positive decision, the Electoral Assistance Division will work in close collaboration with UNDP in preparing an appropriate electoral assistance project. Once drafted and reviewed by UNDP and the Division, the approval and implementation of a technical electoral assistance project is governed by the normal procedures laid out in the programming manual of UNDP. Medium-term and long-term capacity development of electoral institutions is an integral aspect of the governance activities of UNDP through the country cooperation

framework. The Electoral Assistance Division must be consulted at the earliest possible stage with regard to the political and technical aspects of the proposed project, since these aspects can have a bearing on subsequent elections. The Division will respond with any input or advice within 10 working days after receipt of the documents. If no response is received by UNDP within that time period, the project development can proceed. Approval and implementation should follow standard procedures for all activities undertaken within the country cooperation framework. Given the political and often sensitive nature of the electoral environment, however, special caution should be exercised in the national execution of electoral assistance projects. This modality should be limited to cases in which there has been full consultation and there is consensus as regards the impartiality and capacity of the executing agent. For assistance in identifying specialized expertise, the Electoral Assistance Division will provide qualified technical consultants from its roster of electoral experts, as required;

(f) If a Government requests United Nations assistance in the observation of elections, the Electoral Assistance Division will take the lead role in the design, staffing and implementation of such activities, in cooperation with the UNDP resident representative. Often, a separate project is established to provide the operational and legal framework for these activities. Consistent with the nature and purpose of observation, a project to support these activities should normally be independent of any project support provided to the electoral process, systems or institutions;

(g) UNDP resident coordinators/resident representatives will maintain a clear position as regards United Nations impartiality. As such, in supporting an international or national mission, the independent observer group may issue a statement on the election but the United Nations plays only a facilitative role and does not itself express a view on the process or outcome. Resident coordinators/resident representatives should refrain from making political statements to the press, unless specifically authorized by the focal point;

(h) In order to keep the focal point apprised of the political and technical status of electoral assistance projects, the resident representative will submit on a regular basis status reports, including reports from project personnel, to the Electoral Assistance Division. These project reports will form the basis of the report that the Secretary-General is mandated to submit to the General Assembly every two years;

(i) At the conclusion of each project the Electoral Assistance Division, the Bureau for Development Policy of UNDP, and the UNDP regional bureau concerned shall receive a final project report from the resident representative. As appropriate, the Electoral Assistance Division will support the UNDP country office in undertaking independent technical evaluation missions of electoral assistance projects;

(j) Upon the completion of the assignment, or on an annual basis in the case of long-term experts, the resident coordinator/resident representative will be requested to submit to the contracting agency an assessment of the performance of the consultants and/or experts on the roster of the Electoral Assistance Division. This assessment will serve to enhance the effectiveness of the assistance provided and enable the Division to improve future performance and to better anticipate future country needs.

Coordination of electoral assistance among donors

6. Effective coordination of technical assistance is crucial in situations in which several bilateral and multilateral donors, specialized institutions, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations are providing electoral assistance to a country. In the case of countries in which there is a resident special representative of the Secretary-General, the special representative is responsible for overall political coordination. Where there is no resident special representative, UNDP plays the lead United Nations role at the country level as a coordinating mechanism for donor assistance and as a forum for coordination of the activities of a broader range of international and national actors. This coordination role can be exercised through a trust fund or cost-sharing modality, and is essential for maximizing impact and for avoiding potential difficulties, such as duplication or overlapping of assistance, competition among organizations in certain fields of assistance, overburdening national counterparts, or over-funding some aspects of the electoral process to the detriment of others. As required, the Electoral Assistance Division may be called upon to assist in this coordination role.

Further contact

7. The Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, may be contacted at:

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